



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Pike and San Isabel  
National Forests  
Cimarron and Comanche  
National Grasslands

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File Code: 1950

Date: March 28, 2013

Dear Interested Public:

The Pikes Peak Ranger District is seeking the public's input on proposed changes to travel management and recreation activities, and proposed stream habitat improvement actions in the Bear Creek Watershed Restoration Project area. The analysis area for this project includes those National Forest System lands on the Pikes Peak Ranger District in the Bear Creek watershed and adjacent watersheds, about five miles southwest of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The purpose of the Bear Creek Watershed Restoration Project is to provide for the protection of a unique population of greenback cutthroat trout, while also maintaining balance with a variety of recreation opportunities. The need for the proposed project is driven by the vulnerability of the trout population. Recent genetic evidence indicates that the sole known remaining population of genetically pure greenback cutthroat trout inhabits Bear Creek, a tributary of Fountain Creek, itself a tributary of the Arkansas River.

The Bear Creek watershed is located in El Paso and Teller Counties (Figure 1). It is an important recreation area along the Front Range of Colorado, providing motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities on a well-established trail network. Slopes in the watershed are steep, the soils are highly erodible, and parts of the watershed are at risk from large-scale, high-intensity wildfire. In response to public and agency concerns about the vulnerability of the Bear Creek population of the greenback cutthroat trout, an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists recently completed a comprehensive Watershed Assessment to review activities in the watershed and develop a list of recommended management actions.

Many of the recommendations from the Watershed Assessment are now being carried forward as proposed actions in the Bear Creek Watershed Restoration Project. The proposed actions are summarized below. Implementation would take place over several years, depending on funding and work load.



## **Summary of Proposed Actions:**

### **Access**

- Prohibit public access in the Bear Creek watershed except on designated routes.
- Prohibit over-snow vehicle use in the Bear Creek watershed.

### **Aquatic Species / Riparian Habitat / Watershed Health**

- Design and implement stream and riparian habitat improvement projects, including portions of the stream above and below the current occupied reaches.
- Improve existing fish barriers.
- Develop and implement a plan to encourage beaver colonization or expansion, which may include canopy removal in select areas to promote aspen regeneration.

### **Information, Education, and Enforcement**

- Develop and implement an interpretive strategy for fish / fish habitat and selected historic resources of significance.

### **Recreation**

- Institute a permanent ban on camping and campfires.

### **Roads**

- Implement roadway improvements on High Drive to reduce sediment delivery into Bear Creek.

### **Special Uses**

- Withdraw the entire watershed from entry for locatable and leasable minerals.

### **Trails**

- For existing system trails that remain open: maintain, reconstruct, or re-align as needed to minimize erosion risk and sediment production.
- For existing system trails that are closed: rehabilitate the trail surface, cut, and fill slopes to minimize erosion risk and sediment production. All unauthorized routes would also be closed and rehabilitated.
- For new trails, use modern trail design standards to prevent erosion and sediment production, as well as locating the trails outside of the water influence zone and avoiding stream crossings.
- Implement seasonal closures as needed to prevent resource damage to all use.
- A summary of the existing and recommended transportation system is provided in Table 1 and Figure 2.

**Table 1. Comparison of Existing and Recommended Transportation Systems**

Route Type	In Watershed (miles)		Out of Watershed (miles)		Total (miles)	
	Existing	Recommended	Existing	Recommended	Existing	Recommended
Road	2.19	2.19	1.21	1.21	3.40	3.40
Motorized trail	7.93	4.51	9.96	10.79	17.88	15.30
Non-motorized trail	2.04	2.18	2.57	1.53	4.61	3.71
Total	12.16	8.88	13.73	13.52	25.89	22.40

An Open House will be held on Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 from 4:00 - 9:00 p.m. at the Leon Young Service Center (1521 Hancock Expressway, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80903). The intent of the Open House is to continue the conversation with you regarding the proposed changes in the Bear Creek watershed as we begin analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Resource specialists will also be available to discuss specific topics.

Although lands owned by the City of Colorado Springs and managed by the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department and Colorado Springs Utilities occur within the project area, decisions made from the NEPA analysis would apply only to management actions on National Forest System lands. Additional information on the proposed changes, including maps of the analysis area and transportation system changes may be found at the Forest's website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/psicc> and under the heading entitled Spotlights (Bear Creek Watershed Assessment). Questions about the project may also be addressed to [bcc@fs.fed.us](mailto:bcc@fs.fed.us).

### **Opportunities to Provide Comments**

As part of the scoping process for this project, the public can provide comments by mail, fax, or e-mail to:

Bear Creek Watershed Restoration Project  
Pikes Peak Ranger District  
601 S. Weber Street  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903  
(719) 477-4233 fax  
[bcc@fs.fed.us](mailto:bcc@fs.fed.us)

Comments on this project will be most useful if received no later than **April 30, 2013**. Only those individuals who provide comment or otherwise express interest by the close of the comment period may be eligible to appeal or object to the decision pursuant to regulations at 36 CFR Part 215 or 36 CFR Part 218. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Felix Zuercher".

*Acting for:*

Allan Hahn  
District Ranger

Attachments (2)

Figure 1. Map of Bear Creek Watershed Restoration Project Area

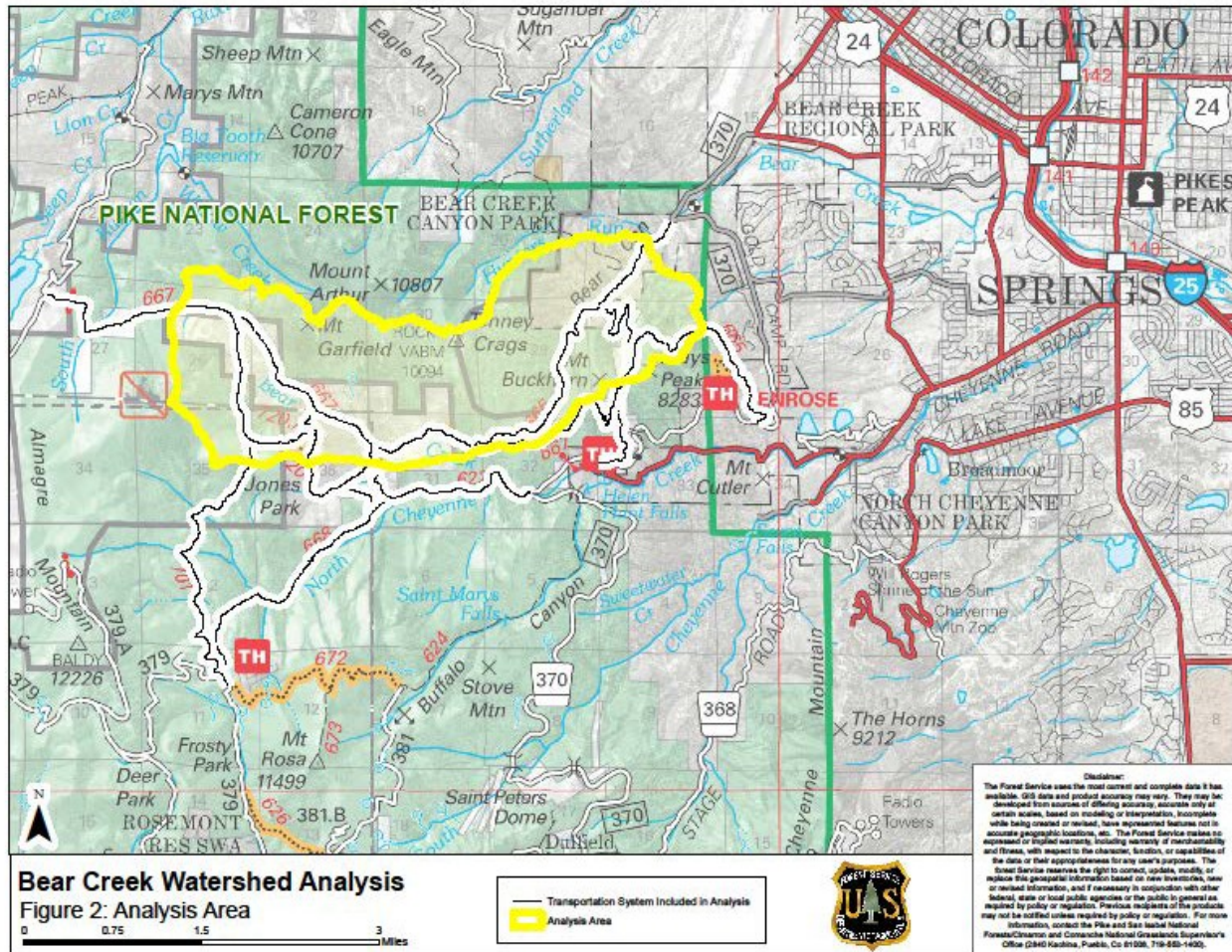




Figure 2. Map of Bear Creek Proposed Transportation System

